



COUNCIL MINUTES

March 23, 2009

The City Council of the City of Mesa met in a Study Session in the lower level meeting room of the Council Chambers, 57 East 1st Street, on March 23, 2009 at 4:33 p.m.

COUNCIL PRESENT

Mayor Scott Smith
Alex Finter
Dina Higgins
Kyle Jones
Dennis Kavanaugh
Dave Richins
Scott Somers

COUNCIL ABSENT

OFFICERS PRESENT

Christopher Brady
Debbie Spinner
Linda Crocker

1. Convene an Executive Session.

It was moved by Vice Mayor Jones, seconded by Councilmember Somers, that the Council convene an Executive Session.

- a. Discussion or consultation with the City Attorney in order to consider the City's position and instruct the City Attorney regarding the City's position regarding contracts that are the subject of negotiations, in pending or contemplated litigation or in settlement discussions conducted in order to avoid or resolve litigation. (A.R.S. §38-431.03A(4))
 1. Arizona Diamondbacks Spring Training
 2. Chicago Cubs Spring Training

Mayor Smith reconvened the Study Session at 5:06 p.m.

2. Review items on the agenda for the March 23, 2009 Regular Council meeting.

All of the items on the agenda were reviewed among Council and staff and the following was noted:

Conflicts of interest declared: None

Items added to the consent agenda: None

Items removed from the consent agenda: None

3. Hear a presentation, discuss and provide direction on Transit budget issues, including Dial-a-Ride.

Transportation Department Director Dan Cleavenger introduced Deputy Transportation Director Mike James and said that although there is no dedicated local funding source for transit service, the Region provides funding through Proposition 400. He explained that a shortfall in Regional funding would be an expense to the City's General Fund. Mr. Cleavenger displayed a PowerPoint presentation (a copy is available for review in the City Clerk's Office) and advised that transit in the City of Mesa includes fixed route bus service, light rail and paratransit services, such as Ride Choice and Dial-a-Ride. He reviewed a chart titled "Transit Budget Overview" (see Attachment 1) and noted that the budget shortfall for the fixed route bus service (\$461,948) and for Dial-A-Ride (\$1,096,764) totals \$1.56 million.

Mr. Cleavenger advised that the City's costs for Light Rail Transit are within the budget allocation, and he reported that Mesa has the most utilized Park-and-Ride facility in the system. He stated that fixed route bus service includes twelve local routes, six express routes, one LINK and one downtown circulator. Mr. Cleavenger added that the costs for the fixed route bus service include maintenance expense for the bus stops and shelters. He noted that the RPTA (Regional Public Transportation Authority) projects a 13 percent cost increase related to additional miles purchased, a contractor rate increase, a reduction in the Federal fuel tax credit and higher fuel costs. He outlined the proposed service adjustments (see Attachment 2) and advised that the estimated savings of \$574,458 enables the fixed route bus service to be within budget.

Mr. Cleavenger said that paratransit services complement fixed route transit and provide service to disabled, elderly and low-income individuals who are unable to utilize the fixed route service. He explained that the options available in Mesa are Ride Choice, the lower cost alternative that offers a mileage reimbursement program and Coupons for Cabs (see Attachment 3), and Dial-A-Ride (see Attachment 4).

In response to a series of questions from Mayor Smith regarding Dial-a-Ride, Mr. James explained that the objective of the service is to pick up the passenger within a half-hour window of the requested time and provide point-to-point service.

Mayor Smith noted that paratransit services are a Regional effort and that the Region determines the amount of the fares.

Mr. Cleavenger advised that Dial-a-Ride program changes include implementing an improved screening process to qualify users, adjusting the hours of operation, and increasing the fare from \$2.00 to \$2.50 in July 2009 with fifty cent increases in each of the two subsequent years. He reported that the RPTA estimates the 2009/2010 budget at approximately \$2.2 million, a 49 percent increase over 2008/2009, which results in a projected City of Mesa budget shortfall of approximately \$1.1 million. Mr. Cleavenger said that in order to maintain the current level of service, staff proposes to apply the one-time bus stop reimbursement of \$600,000 to the Dial-a-Ride service, which reduces the budget shortfall to \$496,764.

Mr. James said that staff worked with the RPTA to determine the reasons for the one-year \$730,000 cost increase. He reported that the escalation of costs resulted from increases for contractors, fuel and overhead in addition to a shortfall in Proposition 400 revenues.

Mr. Cleavenger advised that another scenario would reduce service to the $\frac{3}{4}$ mile area required by Federal mandate, which would result in a budget shortfall of \$48,834.

Responding to a question from Councilmember Somers, Mr. James confirmed that the City of Mesa incurs the cost to provide service to residents of County Islands located within the $\frac{3}{4}$ mile mandated area while some City residents do not receive service.

Mayor Smith stated that the City is required to provide service because a fixed bus route extends through the County islands. He expressed concern regarding the allocation of capital budget dollars to fund operating costs on a one-time basis.

Mr. Cleavenger outlined a third scenario for $\frac{3}{4}$ -mile expanded service

In response to a question from Mayor Smith, Mr. James stated that the City could elect to provide service to an area beyond the $\frac{3}{4}$ mile Federal mandate.

Mr. Cleavenger noted that providing service in selected areas beyond the area mandated by the Federal government could create some equity issues. He reviewed the Dial-a-Ride Service Adjustments and the Transit Budget Summary (see Attachment 5). Mr. Cleavenger summarized staff's recommendation which includes a tentative timeline for the public process (see Attachment 6).

Councilmember Somers requested that provisions be included in the program to address the at-risk population that is not presently being served.

Councilmember Higgins suggested that non-profit agencies could enhance the services provided by Dial-a-Ride.

Mr. James explained that when Dial-a-Ride service is requested by a qualified individual, the service must be provided. He said that non-profits could be utilized to enhance the services, but non-profit agencies could not replace Dial-a-Ride. He added that Ride Choice options are encouraged because of the lower costs, but the individuals cannot be forced to utilize a lower-cost option.

City Manager Christopher Brady stated that the City would be willing to work with a non-profit agency that could provide the service for pre-qualified individuals at a lesser cost.

Mr. Cleavenger stated that staff would defer their request for Council direction until the April 2nd Study Session.

Vice Mayor Jones expressed concern that capital dollars are proposed to be used to address operating costs.

Mayor Smith thanked staff for the presentation, and he noted that the topic would be addressed at the April 2nd Study Session.

4. Acknowledge receipt of minutes of various boards and committees.

- a. Transportation Advisory Board meeting held January 20, 2009
- b. Economic Development Advisory Board meeting held February 3, 2009
- c. General & Economic Development Committee meeting held February 26, 2009

It was moved by Councilmember Somers, seconded by Vice Mayor Jones, that receipt of the above-referenced minutes be acknowledged.

Carried unanimously.

5. Hear reports on meetings and/or conferences attended.

There were no reports on meetings and/or conference attended.

6. Scheduling of meetings and general information.

There were no announcements regarding the scheduling of meetings.

7. Prescheduled public opinion appearances.

- a. Hear from Joey Gornik regarding annexation issues.

Mr. Gornik addressed the Council regarding his request for City utility service for a home he is constructing in a County island. He stated that the City initially quoted a cost of approximately \$375 for an application fee plus \$4,000 to \$6,000 for the connection. He said that he is now being quoted costs of \$13,000 for the application fee plus \$35,000 for the connection with a six-month waiting period.

City Manager Christopher Brady noted that staff has met with the applicant. He stated that the fees being quoted to Mr. Gornik represent an amount that corresponds to the impact fees and that the amount would be the same for a property that was located in the City or the County.

Mayor Smith suggested that Mr. Gornik meet with Deputy City Manager Jack Friedline and Development & Sustainability Director Christine Zielonka. He said that Mr. Gornik would also have an opportunity to present an appeal of his case to the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee.

8. Adjournment.

Without objection, the Study Session adjourned at 5:49 p.m.

SCOTT SMITH, MAYOR

ATTEST:

LINDA CROCKER, CITY CLERK

I hereby certify that the foregoing minutes are a true and correct copy of the minutes of the Study Session of the City Council of Mesa, Arizona, held on the 23rd day of March 2009. I further certify that the meeting was duly called and held and that a quorum was present.

LINDA CROCKER, CITY CLERK

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Attachments (6)